

Enjoying Wines

I recall enjoying a dinner with several Academy members at The French Laundry at the second Academy meeting in Napa Valley in March 2002. Since I made the reservations, I was handed the wine list, there were 7 of us so, I ordered specific red wines; however, the sommelier would not accept my suggestions as he felt that the wines, I selected did not complement the dinner. I understand that some wines pair well with some foods and that The French Laundry is one of the best restaurants in the world and that the sommelier is highly knowledgeable--evidently, my palate is not that sophisticated as I love medium and full-bodied REDs so, I drink red. I enjoy the terms; woody, coffee, cherry, chewy, meaty, jammy, tobacco, etc (hundreds more descriptions), however, seldom do these terminologies determine what I drink.

Nonetheless, at an evening dinner, when you are handed the wine list do you momentarily freeze for fear of sounding ill-informed about wine or selecting an incorrect wine? Or when you sip a wine and are immediately asked "So what do you think?" does this cause you to pause? Do you feel overwhelmed when viewing a massive wine list with its endless wines from around the world with what seems like foreign gibberish?

I understand that learning about wines can be intimidating, so I'm going to break it down for you, hopefully, leaving you feeling comfortable and confident to **just enjoy wine**. There's no right way or wrong way to enjoy wine. I repeat, there is no right way or wrong way to enjoy wine. It's this simple — ***do you like what you're drinking or do you not like what you're drinking?*** Palates differ so what is agreeable to you, may not be agreeable to me and vice versa. Drink what you enjoy; white, red, rose, sweet, fortified or bubbly.

As I was not sure of a reasonable price range for our tasting, I suggested four affordable red wines. Unexpectedly, after identifying the wines we were to enjoy, I was unable to locate them locally. Consequently, join us with whatever wine you wish to enjoy. We are going to learn a little about wine from each other but the dialog is open for any wine or non-wine topic.

Usually there are two major ways to enjoy a wine tasting; vertical tasting or horizontal tasting. A **vertical tasting** compares a wine from a single estate or producer, in which all the wines are produced under the same name or label but come from different years so, you take a particular wine and compare over the years. This vertical tasting allows tasters to see the evolution of a specific wine over time... by contrast, a **horizontal tasting** compares wines from the same year and region/style or producers this typically looks at difference between producers than comparing wines of different vintages from the same producer. However, we'll be enjoying a **DWYW** wine tasting, that is, **Drink Whatever You Wish**.

That said, there's a formal way to taste wine that reveals what you are about to drink from your glass. I find that to get the most out of my wine once I pour me a glass is to **See, Swirl, Sniff/Smell, Sip and Savor**. I will assign **homework** one week before the virtual tasting. I will

select presenters based on attendees. You will have 30 to 60 seconds or less to penetrate a topic to educate the rest of us.

Topics

1. **See** (look) at wine –
2. **Swirl** –
3. **Sniff/Smell** –
4. **Sip** –
5. **Savor** –
6. What exactly is tannin? Is it good or bad?
7. Can red grapes make a white wine?
8. What is fortified wine? Is it the same as sweet wine?
9. Do the data really reveal that red wine is healthy?
10. What is terroir? Is it good? Myth? Reality?
11. Do American wines rival French wines? Why/Why not?
12. Any wines that pair well with Mexican food? See what you can find.
13. Open questions - everyone